

**Minutes
West Middlesex Borough
Work Session Meeting
August 9, 2023**

Call to Order: The West Middlesex Borough Work Session meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Borough President Eric Lucich.

Pledge of Allegiance

Council Present: President Eric Lucich, Vice President Mr. Dave Moyer, Mr. Robert Lark, Mr. Tim Webster, Mr. Bill Novak, Mayor Stacey Curry.

Others Present: Secretary/Treasurer Paula Luca, Streets Department Senior Laborer Mr. Bobby Cochran, WMVFD President Rich Garrett, Ray Lucich, John Clemente, Alan Harrison, Mike Bower, Teresa Walker, John DiCola, Adam Garrett, Brian Harmon, Emma-Lee Hussey, Patric DeJulia, Rob Garrett, Luke Lucich, Don Schlegel, Jeff Hogue.

Public Comments: None

Streets and Sewer Report: The Streets and Sewer report was presented by Mr. Bobby Cochran. **85 Garfield Street:** Bobby reported that the pipe to the catch basin blew out. Seth Anthony recommended a new pipe be placed. Also, the size of the pipe needs to be increased. **Lilly Bridge- West Middlesex Estates Pump:** A new pump has been ordered from V System. The cost is \$7,580 plus \$450 freight. To possibly save of the cost of the freight, he may be able to pick up the pump when it is available. Currently there is a 6-8week lead time. Sly is coming Monday, Wednesday and Friday to pump out the tank. Originally tried to do it 2x a week, however that was not working. They have gone to 3x to try and avoid the weekend, and additional costs. Sly reported it will cost an estimated \$375 each time they come. He will keep Council updated with additional information. **Cold Patch:** Cold patch was used on Campground RD due to the upcoming traffic of the camp residents coming soon. Bobby also reported with school starting soon, he will be painting the crosswalks, turning the light back on, and cutting back the trees on Penn Ave to Campground RD. President, Eric Lucich reminded Bobby to cut the tree branches back a lot due to the complaints of the busses traveling down that road. **Kiwanis Park:** The graffiti at Kiwanis Park has been covered up. Bobby reported Mr. Novak also helped in the clean-up. He also reported that there was minor graffiti at the skate park but it has also been cleaned up. **Stop Signs:** 4- 5 Stop Signs had to be replaced due to being hit. A complaint was received from a resident of a No Parking Sign on Main Street that is very old, rusted, and unable to be read, with a request to have it removed. Bobby will check on the cost to have the sign replaced. **Borough Truck:** The borough truck passed inspection. Mr. Novak inquired on the condition of flooding at O'Neill Coffee. Bobby reported when it rains very hard, they are still experiencing flooding. They have purchased a new pump with higher horse power to help with the flooding situation.

WMFVD President Rich Garrett reported this past week they had to purchase 6 new batteries for the Fire Trucks at the cost of appx: \$185.00 each. Mayor Stacey Curry asked if that was a result of the situation that was experienced this past week? It was. She reported to Council that last Friday there was a strong smell of Sulfur in the building. It was determined it was coming

from the bay area. Mr. Ray Lucich came to see what could be causing the smell. It was determined it was a shorted battery of one of the Trucks. The situation was resolved and the bay was aired out, eliminating the sulfur smell. Mayor Stacey Curry thanked Mr. Ray Lucich for coming and taking care of the issue.

Fire Operational Analysis:

Mr. Adam Garrett read to the Council and all in attendance, a detailed timeline beginning September 2018- April 2022 concerning the Consolidation of West Middlesex Vol. Fire Department and Shenango TWP Fire Department. The timeline began with the Initial "Formal" meeting held at the Shenango Township Social Hall. The meeting to include the Fire department officers, and Attorney Kim Houser. It was explained by Attorney Houser, that most consolidation or merger agreements take 3-5 years to complete. A steering Committee along with finance, by-law, and SOP committees were recommended to begin researching.

After the above information was read a question was asked by Mayor Stacey Curry: As a taxpayer, if this merger was to happen, would it save the taxpayers money? The question was answered by Mr. John DiCola. Mr. DiCola, a member of the Steering Committee, explained that he has been in the Fire department business for 56 years. He has also served on his local Council. In his opinion, Consolidation does not save money. As per the Analysis that was completed: The State can only print on the information that was given. He felt that Shenango TWP wants to keep control. And Mr. Hubert was Mr. Barns in Charge. The WMVDS will have to do as told. In his opinion, the Borough is getting More Bang for Your Buck with the FVD that is ours now. He feels based on what was learned at the above meeting, if consolidated, Shenango TWP Fire Department would have the edge. In his opinion, the municipal needs to step up and support the Fire Department. Politics can not get in the middle. It is a big issue all across the State. Personal differences need to be put aside. He feels if this consolidation were to ever happen, it would cost the Borough of West Middlesex more. He feels Council and VFD need to sit down and discuss how the Council can help out the VFD more.

Rich Garrett discussed the cost of new Radio's. When purchased they paid \$600 each. They will need to purchase 25 new radios at a cost of \$3,600 each. Rob Garret added that the VFD has never come and asked for more money. He feels they are doing pretty good because they have had to. He said, he is a resident of Shenango TWP. and what tax payers of Shenango TWP do not know, the financing of Shenango TWP is ugly. He asked the Council to reconsider joining forces with Shenango TWP Ambulance, or at the very least, ask for their financial numbers. President Eric Lucich reported, that issue has been put on hold.

Mr. Ray Lucich asked the council to read or re-read page 39 of the Study. He feels a lot of time has been spent on this issue and it has failed. And "he does not like to fail".

Mayor Stacey Curry thanked everyone for all of the information. A question was asked to the Fire Department by Mr. Tim Webster: It is his understanding that the WMVFD is not in favor of this merger. They all agreed that is true. He then asked how long ago did you come to this decision? The response was, when they were told Mr. Justin Barnes would be Chief. It then was no longer a consolidation but a Hostel Take Over. Also, when they never moved forward for the 501-C3. Mr. Di Cola added: A merger is when the Larger of the two takes over and the smaller goes away. A consolidation is: When Both come together, and dissolve to develop a NEW organization. That was never their intent. They wanted to have full control and keep ownership.

He then revisited his initial recommendation, the Council and the VFD need to come together, put differences aside and do what is best for the community.

More ideas were presented to Council from the WM Fire Department on more ways they feel that the Council could help with the Fire Department. Maintenance of the Trucks: There are 4 trucks currently that are out of inspection. It is hard to get someone from the Fire Department to take a day off of work to come to come in to have this done. It was brought up that years ago, the Streets Department would do this. A recommendation from Mr. DiCola was that the Streets Dept. Worker become a member of the VFD. Mr. Webster replied, that would be great, however, that would be the decision of the Worker. That is not part of the hiring process.

After much discussion, the question was asked by Mr. Ray Lucich, How do we move forward? Where do we stand? Mr. DiCola added, if this was a fair and equal, a consolation would work. If moving forward it would have to be 50/50%. However, this is not the case. He once again stated that in his opinion, the Borough has a good thing with the WM Fire Department. They need to work together to come up with a 5 - 10year plan for the future. He feels, at this time, the West Middlesex Council needs to put this study and the consolidation on hold. Mr. Lark motioned to have it put on Tuesday's Agenda for a vote to put the Study and Consolidation on hold.

Mr. Webster then asked the Fire Department, how many of you are on WM VFD and also Shenango TWP Fire Department. The answer was less then 5. The WM Fire Department feels that this study, the meetings and everything involved has caused a hardship between both departments and moved the departments backwards 5 years. There is a trust issue now. However, all agreed they still would like to do training together.

Mayor Stacey once again thanked everyone for all of the information provided. Mr. Ray Lucich commented, in his opinion, this has been a very productive meeting. WMVFD President Rich Garrett thanked the Council for the meeting. He added, if there are any questions, contact him. If he does not have an answer, her will get it.

Mr. Jeff Hogue added, as an outsider, in his opinion, it was not West Middlesex VFD that was causing the issues. He feels, there is a reason Shenango TWP does not want to turn over their financial information. He then spoke concerning the opening of the FED EX facility in Hermitage. He stated there will be 6 Semi Trucks entering and leaving the facility every 6 minutes. This is going to be an issue for West Middlesex. There will be more of an issue of 18 south entering 376. This will most likely cause more traffic coming into town. He feels this is going to be a huge nightmare. The Council of West Middlesex needs to address this issue. How is this extra traffic going to be handled. He also reported the meeting with Pennsylvania Dept of Transportation that was recently held was very successful. He thanked Mr. Lark for attending the meeting. Mayor Stacey added information concerning the proposal from the WM Sewer Authority to address the drain problem at Sweesy Field. Mayor Stacey Curry also added that Mr. Campbell offered to supply the equipment and man power when needed for the project.

Other information from Mayor Stacey was: The new signs from the Kawanis Club coming into town with information about the Santa Visits. Information concerning the property on Erie Street, and the Judge decision to allow 9 more months for the property owner to get his finances in order. It was discussed a lien needs to be placed on the property for the money owed to the Sewer Account. Both items to be placed on the up coming Council Meeting Agenda.

The meeting ended at 8:35.

